



# Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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## **WSDA and USDA to increase surveillance efforts for Avian Influenza**

**OLYMPIA** – Even though there has not been a case of Avian Influenza reported in Washington, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) are stepping up their surveillance efforts in Whatcom County.

In an effort to prevent the spread of the disease from British Columbia, teams of USDA veterinarians and animal health inspectors plan to begin canvassing a 10-mile wide band along the U.S.-Canadian border early next week. They will be talking with bird and poultry owners about Avian Influenza: symptoms to watch for, what to do if they suspect they have a case of Avian Influenza, and biosecurity measures they should practice to keep their flocks free of disease.

They also will be asking bird owners for permission to test their birds, which would involve oral swabbing.

“We want to emphasize that these increased surveillance efforts are strictly precautionary,” said Dr. Kathleen Connell, WSDA state veterinarian. “We encourage owners to cooperate with us. It will be much cheaper and easier in the long run to take whatever measures are necessary to keep this disease out of our state.”

There has never been a case of high pathogenic Avian Influenza in Washington. However, the disease has ravaged the poultry industry in British Columbia, where an estimated 19 million birds will be destroyed.

“We have not had a reported case of Avian Influenza in Washington and we want to keep it that way,” said Dr. Connell. “That’s why the USDA has agreed to send a team of experienced people out here to help us stay on top of this.”

For more information about Avian Influenza, see the WSDA Web site at [www.agr.wa.gov](http://www.agr.wa.gov). Or, call our toll-free number, 1-866-819-5308, for the latest information on the disease.

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